scheme to Ioma and other areas. At Ioma "it was only when faced with the alternative of going to gaol for failure to pay tax that they were induced to work on the plantation .... In other districts the natives elected to pay their taxes in money" (P.A.R. 1925-6 : 52). The scheme survived, according to Captain Humphries (1944 : 2) who was at one stage responsible for it, "only because of the gaol that loomed in the background."

The standard penalty for failure to work was three months' imprisonment which was served by working on the government coconut plantations at Buna or Ioma, or on the government rubber plantation at Kokoda. These plantations were worked entirely by prison labour (apart from supervisory and specialist staff) and many of the older men we spoke to had served sentences for breaches of this ordinance. In fact, as Mair (1945 : 83) notes, the existence of government plantations which had no provision for paid labour acted as an incentive to prosecute for breaches of this and other laws.

Daily work on the community coffee gardens was supervised by the village constables who were thus in a position of considerable authority. Nevertheless, this role may not have been particularly congenial for the constable was as likely as anyone to be punished for failure to keep the work up to standard. There was not a constable for each village, and the constable at Ongoho, for example, was responsible for the nine Asigi villages which worked the Ongoho block.(1) The constables in turn were supervised by Papuan foremen known as "coffee bosses", each of whom was responsible for a number of communal gardens. The "coffee bosses" in turn were responsible to the European Controller of Native Plantations who was based at Higaturu.

Such was the difficulty of getting labour to carry the produce from the factory at Higaturu to the port of Sanananda (near Buna) that a special regulation was passed requiring all able-bodied men to carry produce whenever instructed to do so.(2)

(1) For supervision of the plantation and normal police services he was paid ten shillings per year.

(2) Native Plantations (Northern Division Carrying) Regulations 1928.

242 acres[1] which yielded 84 tons of hulled coffee in 1938-39. Some 1,000 cocoa trees were also planted in the pre-war period, although only the copra and coffee were worked during this time. All commercial agriculture ceased with the Japanese invasion in the second world war and was again interrupted by the eruption of Mt Lamington in 1951. The principle of compulsion was withdrawn in the same year and community enterprise largely ceased in the mid 1950s with an increasing trend towards individual plantings. The whole scheme was characterised not only by low returns to labour, delays in payment,[2] frequent disputed claims to plantings and serious problems in work organisation, but also by a definite feeling of resentment on the part of the indigenous participants.

(c) War and natural disaster

The Orokaiva view of the government was no doubt influenced by the second world war, which led to the Japanese occupation of the Northern District from July 1942 to January 1943, and by the eruption of Mt Lamington in January 1951, causing the death of over 4,000 people and the destruction of the district headquarters and staff at Higaturu.

The impact of the Japanese invasion and subsequent Allied re-advance has never been assessed but must be considered profound. All Australian administration ceased and, when resumed, was vested in the Australian New Guinea Administrative Unit (ANGAU), a military authority. Several thousand men co-opted as carriers by both Australians and Japanese worked under very arduous conditions.[3] Since the Orokaiva lay athwart the main Buna-Kokoda route which was the scene of fierce fighting, many villagers retreated into the surrounding hills where they were obliged to subsist on very limited resources because of the absence of much of the potential labour force.[4] Others sided with the Japanese or profited by the power vacuum to attack or betray Allied troops and civilians or to assert their authority over other Orokaiva. On resumption of Australian rule, twenty-two men were sentenced for such deeds by a military tribunal and publicly hanged at Sangara and Higaturu.[5]

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[1] An estimated 111,000 trees at a spacing of 10 by 10 feet.

[2] As much as three years lapsing between delivery and payment (see DDA, DS-17-4-5).

[3] For details of terms for the conscription and of conditions, see McCarthy 1959:116, 132.

[4] A 1948 report refers to a rapidly decreasing population on the northern slopes of Mt Lamington and attributes it in part to the war when many died from malnutrition while hiding in the bush (Higaturu 29-8-33).

[5] A European informant stated that 'several thousand Orokaiva' witnessed the execution, the women 'wailing and mutilating themselves'.

653 a council responsibility. While the rebuilding of the arterial road
[491] from Popondetta and Kokoda was an expensive (and seemingly interminable) responsibility of the government, the side roads became the council's responsibility. Similarly, the government built the major hospitals while the council looked after the village aid posts.

652 The council's revenue mainly came from taxes--a head tax of $8 for men and $1 for women. This is the only personal tax directly levied among Orokaiva village people and has replaced the government
[687] head tax. Its collection was not a government but a council responsibility, although defaulters could, of course, be brought before a magistrate and sentenced to a term in a government jail. Councillors explained to the villagers that the taxes they paid went to pay for their roads, aid posts, water supplies, etc. The government hoped that villagers would be more ready to pay their taxes if they could see tangible local benefits to justify them. One effect of the system was that villagers became very interested to see that as much as possible of the tax money should be spent in their own locality. They rapidly developed a strong propensity for parish-pump politics. When I visited Sasembata district first, there was little evidence of any council projects in the Sasembata wards. People objected to paying
[664] their taxes: they were not getting anything for them. Pressure resulted in roading improvements and plans for a comprehensive water supply for the area. Councillors who did not fight successfully for such causes were liable to miss re-election.

The head tax manifestly acted as a significant economic incentive.
[461] A man who grew no coffee and earned no money could not pay his tax. Even if a man could not be bothered harvesting all his coffee, he would certainly harvest enough to pay his tax. Some men who had no coffee took plantation jobs a month or two before the tax was due. I noticed this in two cases at Inonda; most of the Sivepe men had coffee
[667] gardens and did not need to work outside. For the first time, tax defaulters in 1966 were actually jailed for two months. In one village, Kendata, there were as many as 50 defaulters who fought the police and ran into the bush; in Sivepe there were four, all without coffee gardens.

In spite of this tension, people generally supported the ideology
[77] of the council: they wanted the "new age" and they wanted the kind
623 of services that were supplied by the council. At the same time it was never forgotten that behind the tax-gathering councillors stood the government police, armed and ready to make arrests if the councillors were resisted or attached, as sometimes happened. Those who did not pay and tried to escape arrests were judged by the conformists to be ignorant men, unwisely looking for trouble. On the other hand, people deeply sympathised with them. People wanted the "new age," but they did not like the element of compulsion that went with it. They re-elected the councillors who compelled them because they held the Australian authorities, not the councillors, to be directly responsible.